TL1456

AUSTRALIAN COALITION FOR EAST TIMOR

CIET (ACT) • GPO Box 2583 • Canberra ACT 2601 • Australia • Tel. (062) 477962

INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT'S TIMOR DEAL

Media Release (28-Nov-89)

National and international criticism is mounting of the Timor Gap treaty which is to divide the oil-rich Timor Gap area between Australia and Indonesia. The treaty is to be signed on 10 December 1989 according to International Law, belongs to Portugal.

The Chairman of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group in the UK, Lord Avebury, said in a statement released in Canberra today (Tuesday) that the "agreement by Indonesia and Australia on the exploitation of seabed resources in between East Timor and Australia is a violation of International Law and an act of aggression against the people of East Timor." The statement calls on Australians not to "barter another people's liberties in return for the friendship of a corrupt and vicious military dictatorship".

In Sydney, the President of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Justice Marcus Einfeld, said that "our region of geography and influence is beset by the struggle of human beings to survive in freedom and dignity" and he described recent developments in East Timor as "serious and tragic". Justice Einfeld said that all human beings have the right to "freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development" and that "a corollary to this right is sovereignty over natural resources."

In Canberra, Law Professor Garth Nettheim, Chairman of the Human Rights Centre of the University of NSW, referred to the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law which states that "no territorial acquisition resulting from the threat or use of force shall be recognised as legal". Professor Nettheim also said that Portugal might initiate action against Australia in the International Court of Justice over the treaty.

The President of the Australian Coalition for East Timor in the A.C.T., Dr Michael Wagner, said at a protest meeting at Parliament House on Monday that it was shameful for the Government to first acquiesce in the brutal Indonesian occupation of East Timor and then to share the spoils by dividing the oil-rich Timor Gap area between Indonesia and Australia.

The protest meeting of some 200 people also heard addresses by the Member for Streeton, Mr Tony Lamb, Senators Jean Jenkins and Jo Vallentine, South Coast Trades and Labour Council Secretary, Mr Paul Matters and by representatives of the East Timorese National Convergence.

Attachments: Statements by Lord Avebury and Justice Einfeld
Further information: Dr Michael Wagner, (062) 688955 (W) or (062) 477962 (H)